

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1755

To award grants to States to establish, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs for children ages 3 through 5 in rural areas.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 26, 2009

Mr. HARE (for himself, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. LOEBSACK, and Ms. HIRONO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To award grants to States to establish, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs for children ages 3 through 5 in rural areas.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FACTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Rural Early Education Access Act”.

6 (b) FACTS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Investing in early childhood programs can
8 yield positive gains for children and rural commu-
9 nities, such as—

- 1 (A) academic achievement and progression;
2 (B) decreased cost to local governments for
3 expensive social services, such as special edu-
4 cation;
5 (C) a skilled and productive workforce; and
6 (D) economic development.

7 (2) The 2007 National Center for Education
8 Statistics report “Status of Education in Rural
9 America” found that rural areas maintain the lowest
10 level of enrollment in preschool programs when com-
11 pared with urban and suburban school districts.

12 (3) In 2006, an estimated 2.69 million children
13 between the ages of three and five were living in
14 rural areas, and only half had access to “center-
15 based preschool”.

16 (4) Students in rural districts have been found
17 to be fifteen percent less likely to begin kindergarten
18 with key early literacy skills and fifty percent less
19 likely to possess beginning sounds recognition than
20 urban and suburban children.

21 (5) Rural children are sixty percent more likely
22 to require special education placement than children
23 from non-rural areas.

24 (6) Rural communities face significant obstacles
25 in providing access to high quality preschool pro-

1 grams needed to mitigate these problems, such as
2 limited financial resources, scarcity of qualified
3 teachers, deficient training and professional develop-
4 ment opportunities, inadequate facilities, and lack of
5 transportation options.

6 (7) In spite of increasing State investments, ac-
7 cess to high-quality preschool programs varies widely
8 among urban, suburban, and rural areas within a
9 State due to the lack of capacity in rural commu-
10 nities.

11 (8) Head Start offers the only option for high
12 quality early education in rural communities, how-
13 ever, many low-income children living in rural set-
14 tings do not qualify, and many who do qualify are
15 not being served.

16 (9) Given rural challenges and limited access to
17 preschool programs in rural communities, Federal
18 investments are necessary in order for children in
19 rural areas to benefit from the research-proven gains
20 offered by high-quality early learning programs.

21 (10) On March 10, 2009, President Obama
22 called on Congress to enact the Early Learning
23 Challenge Grant to help States raise the quality of
24 early learning programs.

1 (11) Federal funding for preschool programs
2 that require States to compete for funds and then
3 allows them to create a formula to provide grants to
4 rural providers will increase the availability of high
5 quality early childhood education opportunities.

6 **SEC. 2. RURAL EARLY EDUCATION GRANTS.**

7 (a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—From the amounts
8 made available to carry out this Act, the Secretary shall
9 make grants to States to establish, enhance, or expand
10 high-quality preschool programs provided by rural pre-
11 school providers.

12 (b) DURATION OF GRANTS.—

13 (1) INITIAL GRANTS.—An initial grant under
14 this Act shall be for a period of 5 years.

15 (2) ADDITIONAL GRANTS.—An initial grant
16 under this Act may be renewed under section 11.

17 **SEC. 3. STATE ACTIVITIES.**

18 (a) REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—Except as provided
19 in subsection (b), a State shall use funds received under
20 this Act to carry out a program to award subgrants to
21 rural preschool providers in accordance with the applica-
22 tion requirements under section 4 and the formula re-
23 quirements under section 5.

24 (b) ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS.—A State that re-
25 ceives a grant under this Act may use up to 5 percent

1 of the grant to perform one or more of the following State
2 activities:

3 (1) Providing consultation to administrators of
4 rural preschool providers on strategies to combine
5 services with local Head Start agencies to expand
6 enrollment or to provide additional services to chil-
7 dren enrolled in programs provided by the rural pre-
8 school providers.

9 (2) Creating partnerships between rural pre-
10 school providers and institutions of higher education
11 in order to enable participating teachers and para-
12 professionals to obtain a bachelor's degree as non-
13 traditional students by expanding a State-funded
14 professional development program (or other existing
15 program) to include a program for preschool teach-
16 ers who are employed in rural areas.

17 (3) Providing relief for student loans and other
18 incentives for preschool teachers who are employed
19 by rural preschool providers after receiving a bach-
20 elor's degree in early childhood education.

21 (4) Establishing a monitoring system to ensure
22 that all rural preschool providers awarded a grant
23 under this Act demonstrate progress toward imple-
24 menting high-quality preschool programs.

1 (5) Developing and implementing statewide pro-
2 cedures to promote coordination between rural pre-
3 school providers and local educational agencies.

4 (6) Disseminating information about the finan-
5 cial management of rural preschool providers, in-
6 cluding financial management strategies that com-
7 bine Federal, State, local, and private funds.

8 **SEC. 4. STATE APPLICATIONS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—A State desiring to receive a grant
10 under this Act shall submit an application to the Secretary
11 at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may
12 reasonably require.

13 (b) REQUIRED CONTENTS.—The application referred
14 to in subsection (a) shall include—

15 (1) a description of how the funding formula in
16 section 5 will ensure that funds are received only by
17 eligible rural preschool providers in such State;

18 (2) a plan for measuring the progress dem-
19 onstrated by rural preschool providers in such State
20 toward implementing high-quality preschool pro-
21 grams;

22 (3) an assurance that the State, at a minimum,
23 will ensure that the total expenditure by the State
24 and its political subdivisions to support such pro-
25 grams for the fiscal year for which the grant is

1 made is equal to, or greater than, such expenditure
2 for the preceding fiscal year;

3 (4) how the State will—

4 (A) promote coordination between rural
5 preschool providers and the local educational
6 agencies in such State;

7 (B) ensure that institutions of higher edu-
8 cation in such State will receive funds for ac-
9 tivities pursuant to section 3(b)(2), if applica-
10 ble;

11 (C) ensure that partnerships between rural
12 preschool providers and Head Start programs
13 under section 7(b) in such State will enhance
14 the quality or the availability of resources pro-
15 vided to children served by the Head Start
16 agency; and

17 (D) determine that rural preschool pro-
18 viders in such State fulfill the minimum eligi-
19 bility requirements of section 6; and

20 (5) a description of the lead agency in such
21 State, designated by the Governor of such State, to
22 administer and to supervise the implementation of
23 programs authorized under this Act.

1 **SEC. 5. ALLOTMENT TO RURAL PRESCHOOL PROVIDERS.**

2 Each State shall create a formula to award subgrants
3 to rural preschool providers that considers—

4 (1) factors that impede the implementation of a
5 high-quality preschool program, including geo-
6 graphical barriers, local poverty rates, and scarcity
7 of professional development opportunities for teach-
8 ers;

9 (2) the educational needs of children enrolled in
10 the rural preschool program provided by a rural pre-
11 school provider, including children with learning dis-
12 abilities and limited English proficiency; and

13 (3) the current availability of rural preschool
14 program opportunities.

15 **SEC. 6. ELIGIBILITY FOR RURAL PRESCHOOL PROVIDERS.**

16 (a) **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.**—In order to re-
17 ceive a subgrant under this Act, a rural preschool provider
18 must demonstrate that it—

19 (1) maintains a maximum classroom size of 20
20 children per classroom;

21 (2) maintains a teacher-to-student ratio of 10
22 to 1 or lower;

23 (3) implements a program that adheres to com-
24 prehensive early learning standards;

1 (4) provides at least one highly nutritious meal
2 for each child for every 3 hours of program partici-
3 pation per day; and

4 (5) provides at least one highly nutritious snack
5 for each child participating in the program for up to
6 3 hours per day.

7 (b) WAIVER.—A rural preschool provider that ex-
8 ceeds the classroom size and ratio requirements in para-
9 graphs (1) and (2) of subsection (a) due to smaller enroll-
10 ments or geographic barriers may apply to have such re-
11 quirements waived in order to receive a subgrant under
12 this Act. The State shall designate an appropriate agency
13 with expertise in early childhood education to review and
14 to approve such applications.

15 **SEC. 7. LOCAL USE OF FUNDS.**

16 (a) REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—A rural preschool
17 provider that receives a subgrant under this Act shall use
18 funds to meet one or more of the following program re-
19 quirements:

20 (1) Providing one highly competent assistant
21 teacher per classroom of more than 10 children.

22 (2) Providing not less than 15 hours of partici-
23 pation in a high-quality professional development
24 program for each teacher per school year.

1 (3) Providing health screening and referral
2 services for children enrolled in the preschool pro-
3 gram, including regular dental and vision screenings.

4 (4) Providing resources and qualified staff nec-
5 essary to serve children with disabilities.

6 (5) Providing resources and qualified staff nec-
7 essary to serve children of limited English pro-
8 ficiency.

9 (6) Coordinating with local educational agen-
10 cies.

11 (b) HEAD START-PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—In order to fulfill the re-
13 quirements of subsection (a), a rural preschool pro-
14 vider may use grant funds to form a partnership
15 with a local Head Start agency. Such partnerships
16 shall pay for the services needed to serve preschool
17 students not eligible for a Head Start program,
18 which may include services, such as—

19 (A) facilities, including classroom space;

20 (B) health screening and referral services;

21 (C) materials and supplies used in a pre-
22 school or Head Start program; and

23 (D) highly competent teachers and assist-
24 ant teachers.

1 (2) LIMITATION.—The provision of services
2 through a partnership with a local Head Start agen-
3 cy shall not reduce the quality or availability of re-
4 sources provided to eligible children served by the
5 Head Start agency.

6 (c) ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS.—Rural preschool
7 providers that have satisfied any one requirement in sub-
8 section (a) may use the remaining funds to—

9 (1) establish partnerships with local community
10 colleges and institutions of higher education to en-
11 able teachers and staff to participate as nontradi-
12 tional students in degree programs that award a
13 bachelor’s degree, or higher credential, in early
14 childhood education;

15 (2) recruit more highly competent preschool
16 teachers and provide incentives to retain such teach-
17 ers, including salary enhancements and enhanced
18 employee benefits packages;

19 (3) provide resources necessary to enroll more
20 children and offer the full range of services provided
21 by the rural preschool provider to newly enrolled
22 children;

23 (4) provide safe and efficient transportation to
24 and from the program provided by the rural pre-
25 school provider;

1 (5) extend part-day programs to full-day pro-
2 grams and part-week programs to full-week pro-
3 grams;

4 (6) implement programs to encourage parents
5 to support their children's early education, such as
6 after school reading programs and regular home vis-
7 its by preschool teachers with students and their
8 families; and

9 (7) promote coordination with local educational
10 agencies.

11 **SEC. 8. MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.**

12 The Secretary shall not make a grant to a State
13 under this Act unless the State agrees to the following:

14 (1) In the case of a State that provides funding
15 to rural preschool providers to carry out a program
16 that, in addition to the requirements under sections
17 6 and 7, meets the following requirements, the non-
18 Federal share of the cost of the activities under this
19 Act will be 40 percent:

20 (A) Provide an assistant teacher with an
21 associate's degree in early childhood education
22 or a child development associate's credential in
23 every classroom of more than 10 children; and

24 (B) Adopt a plan for requiring that, within
25 5 years after the State first receives a grant

1 under this Act, all lead teachers employed by a
2 rural preschool provider hold a bachelor's de-
3 gree in early childhood education or in a related
4 field with specialized training in early childhood
5 education.

6 (2) In the case of a State that provides funding
7 to rural kindergarten providers to carry out a pro-
8 gram that meets the requirements under sections 6
9 and 7, the non-Federal share of the cost of the ac-
10 tivities under this Act will be 50 percent.

11 (3) In the case of a State that does not provide
12 any funding for rural preschool providers, the non-
13 Federal share of the cost of the activities under this
14 Act will be 60 percent.

15 **SEC. 9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**

16 Each State that receives a grant under this Act shall
17 report the following to the Secretary annually:

18 (1) The progress of each local preschool pro-
19 vider in implementing high-quality preschool pro-
20 grams.

21 (2) The number of rural preschool providers re-
22 ceiving funding.

23 (3) Such information as the Secretary may rea-
24 sonably require regarding State and local partner-

1 ships with higher education institutions that are
2 supported with funds awarded under this Act.

3 (4) The number of rural preschool programs
4 that have extended from part-day to full-day and
5 part-week to full-week.

6 (5) The number of rural preschool programs
7 that have formed partnerships with local Head Start
8 providers pursuant to section 7(b).

9 (6) The number of students in average daily at-
10 tendance at programs provided by rural preschool
11 providers, and the net increase or decrease of such
12 attendance per year.

13 (7) State activities to disseminate information
14 and to provide consultation about program financing
15 among administrators of rural preschool programs,
16 pursuant to section 3(b).

17 (8) Progress in promoting coordination between
18 rural preschool providers and local educational agen-
19 cies.

20 **SEC. 10. SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.**

21 Funds made available under this Act may be used
22 only to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal,
23 State, local, or private funds that would, in the absence
24 of the funds made available under this Act, be made avail-
25 able for early childhood programs.

1 **SEC. 11. RENEWAL PROCEDURE.**

2 Five years after receiving an initial grant under this
3 Act, a State may apply to renew the grant for an addi-
4 tional 5-year period, by providing to the Secretary—

5 (1) the information reported under section 9;

6 (2) a demonstration that the State and local
7 share of per-child expenditures on rural preschool
8 providers receiving funds under this Act has in-
9 creased at a rate equal or greater to the rate of in-
10 flation over the 5-year period of the previous grant
11 award;

12 (3) a demonstration that State investments in
13 other forms of early childhood education and care
14 have not decreased as a consequence of increased in-
15 vestments in rural preschool programs;

16 (4) information sufficient to determine such
17 State’s eligibility for matching funds under section
18 8; and

19 (5) any additional information that the Sec-
20 retary may reasonably require.

21 **SEC. 12. DEFINITIONS.**

22 In this Act, the following definitions apply:

23 (1) **COMPREHENSIVE EARLY LEARNING STAND-**
24 **ARDS.**—The term “comprehensive early learning
25 standards” means standards that offer guidance to
26 rural preschool providers and ensure that they cover

1 the full range of areas essential to children’s learn-
2 ing and development, which standards shall include
3 the following early learning domains:

4 (A) Social-emotional development.

5 (B) Approaches to learning.

6 (C) Language development.

7 (D) Cognition and general knowledge.

8 (2) FULL-DAY.—The term “full-day”, when
9 used in reference to a rural preschool provider,
10 means a provider with a minimum of a 6-hour
11 schedule per day.

12 (3) FULL-WEEK.—The term “full-week”, when
13 used in reference to a rural preschool provider,
14 means a provider with a minimum of a 5-day sched-
15 ule per week.

16 (4) HEAD START AGENCY.—The term “Head
17 Start agency” means any local public or private non-
18 profit agency or for-profit agency that is designated
19 as a Head Start agency under section 641 of the
20 Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9836).

21 (5) HEAD START PROGRAM.—The term “Head
22 Start program” means a program provided by a
23 Head Start agency.

24 (6) HIGHLY NUTRITIOUS MEAL.—The term
25 “highly nutritious meal” means a meal that meets

1 the component requirements prescribed by the Sec-
2 retary of Agriculture for the National School Lunch
3 Program, pursuant to section 9(a) of the Richard B.
4 Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
5 1758(a)).

6 (7) HIGHLY NUTRITIOUS SNACK.—The term
7 “highly nutritious snack” means a snack that con-
8 sists of the component requirements prescribed by
9 the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to section 17
10 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch
11 Act (42 U.S.C. 1766(a)).

12 (8) HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM.—
13 The term “high-quality preschool program”, when
14 used in this Act, refers to an educational program
15 serving children ages 3 through 5 that—

16 (A) adheres to comprehensive early learn-
17 ing standards that address all areas of early
18 childhood development;

19 (B) provides at least one highly nutritious
20 meal for each child for every 3 hours of pro-
21 gram participation per day and one highly nu-
22 tritious snack for each child participating in
23 less than 3 hours per day;

24 (C) provides in every classroom, a lead
25 teacher with a bachelor’s degree in early child-

hood education, or in a related field with specialized training in early childhood education;

(D) provides an assistant teacher with an associate's degree in early childhood education or a child development associate's credential in every classroom of more than 10 children;

(E) provides opportunities for teachers to participate in at least 15 hours of high-quality professional development per year; and

(F) provides vision, hearing, and health screening and referral services to enrolled children.

(9) HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—The term “high-quality professional development program”, used in reference to professional development programs that serve preschool teachers, means a program that prepares teachers to—

(A) teach with a high level of oral, written, and technological communication skills;

(B) understand research and data relevant to early childhood education and to use developmentally appropriate instructional techniques, including techniques that are based on an un-

1 derstanding of comprehensive early learning
2 standards; and

3 (C) identify children with developmental
4 disabilities and provide appropriate referral
5 services for such children.

6 (10) HIGHLY COMPETENT.—The term “highly
7 competent”—

8 (A) when used in reference to a lead teach-
9 er in a preschool classroom, means a teacher
10 with a bachelor’s degree in early childhood edu-
11 cation who has demonstrated a high level of
12 knowledge and use of developmentally appro-
13 priate research-based curricula for early child-
14 hood education; and

15 (B) when used in reference to an assistant
16 teacher in a preschool classroom, means an as-
17 sistant teacher with specialized education and
18 training in development and education of young
19 children from birth until entry into kinder-
20 garten, with—

21 (i) an associate’s degree in early child-
22 hood education; or

23 (ii) a child development associate’s
24 credential recognized by a Head Start
25 agency.

1 (11) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

2 The term “institution of higher education” has the
3 meaning given such term in section 102 of the High-
4 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002).

5 (12) NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT.—The term

6 “nontraditional student” has the meaning given in
7 section 861(b)(3) of the Higher Education Act of
8 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1161q(b)(3)).

9 (13) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term

10 “local educational agency” has the meaning given
11 such term in section 9101 of the Elementary and
12 Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

13 (14) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area”

14 means a geographic area served by a rural local edu-
15 cational agency.

16 (15) RURAL LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

17 The term “rural local educational agency” means a
18 local educational agency having administrative con-
19 trol or direction of schools which meet a metro-cen-
20 tric locale code of 41, 42, or 43 as determined by
21 the National Center for Education Statistics, in con-
22 junction with the Bureau of the Census, using the
23 system of the National Center for Education Statis-
24 tics for classifying local educational agencies.

1 (16) RURAL PRESCHOOL PROVIDER.—The term
2 “rural preschool provider” means a provider of a
3 preschool program, a Head Start agency, a local
4 educational agency that provides preschool services,
5 or a provider of a child care program, a nonprofit
6 or for-profit agency, that—

7 (A) has met applicable State requirements
8 governing the entities that receive State funds
9 in order to carry out a preschool program; and

10 (B) serves children who reside within a
11 rural area.

12 (17) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”
13 means the Secretary of Education.

14 (18) STATE.—The term “State” has the mean-
15 ing given such term in section 9101 of the Elemen-
16 tary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20
17 U.S.C. 7801).

